

Illegal Blockades: GAC Update (15 Feb.)

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Date: Tue, 15 Feb 2022 19:29:11 +0000

Attachments: IB_WSHDC-#767878-v1-2022-02-15 CONGRESSIONAL and STATE_GOVERNORS reaction to trucker protest.DOCX (17.04 kB); Trucker Protest Rollup 1 (Feb 15).docx (46.28 kB); RELEASE-Governor Whitmer on Reopening of Ambassador Bridge.pdf (560.93 kB)

Sharing a product re: “Illegal Blockades” prepared for the DMs earlier today.
S.

From: Wynne-Hughes, Antonia -USS -DMA <Antonia.Wynne-Hughes@international.gc.ca>
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Subject: Illegal Blockades: GAC Update (15 Feb.)

Many thanks Sébastien!

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[...]

1. **Media Coverage *Emergencies Act*:** US and Int'l Media (eg. Bild, El Pais, Le Monde, The Independent) coverage overnight and today is focused on Canada's decision to invoke *The Emergencies Act* to address the ongoing illegal blockades and the RCMP arrests in Alberta. US headlines match coverage depending on liberal or conservative viewpoint. Last evening, The New York Times mistakenly tweeted that the PM would temporarily suspend civil liberties - tweet was subsequently deleted following a barrage of outrage by readers. Our Media team in Washington is actively ensuring media reporting accuracy via 'detect and correct'. (See attached roll-up of media & reactions from members of Congress and Governors.)



2. Canada-US Engagement:

- US Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman, in a call to USS this am, welcomed the resumption of traffic on the Ambassador Bridge.
- Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued a statement welcoming the reopening of the Ambassador bridge, highlighting the costs and disruptions and stating that: "It's important to ensure that this does not happen again." (attached)
- South Dakota Governor decried the "dishonesty" of media "supporting leaders like Trudeau". (see below)
- Minister Joly's call to Secretary Blinken now planned for Wednesday.
- Minister Alghabra scheduled to engage with Amb.Cohen today.

3. s.39

4. **Minneapolis (Feb 14):** General Mills (food company) reached out to MNPLS/IBD to note they were seeing supply chain disruptions resulting from the blockades at the Emerson and Coutts crossings (General Mills re-routed through Sprague, MB and North Portal, SK). On Feb. 10, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem appeared on Sean Hannity's Fox News show. [The Governor later tweeted](#) a link to the video of her appearance, complaining about "the media...supporting leaders like Trudeau and others taking away people's personal freedoms..."



Kristi Noem
@KristiNoem

...

The amazing amount of dishonesty in the national media that's happening, supporting leaders like Trudeau and others taking away people's personal freedoms, is still unbelievable to watch.

[Traduire le Tweet](#)



5. **New York (Feb. 15):** CNGNY/PRMNY have been the target of several protests over the past two weeks, with The New York Freedom Rally repeatedly marching outside the Chancery to protest COVID-19 mask and vaccine mandates in solidarity with protests/marches being held across Canada. The protests have generated limited turnout and remained peaceful. NY Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) tweeted: "My team is monitoring the Canadian truck protest situation on New York's northern border. We have convened an interagency command center to ensure we are prepared for any impacts to New Yorkers."
6. **Detroit (Feb. 14):** The Ambassador Bridge reopened to traffic after a nearly 7-day closure brought about by a group of protesters at the foot of the bridge in Windsor. Upon reopening, Michigan Governor Whitmer issued a press release (attached), her third on the matter. DTROT territory interlocutors uniformly expressed support for Canadian democratic principles of the right to associate and freedom of speech. However, their main message was an urgent economic need to reopen the border. Several officials and industry groups issued press releases and social media posts to express this goal; some called for bringing manufacturing "back" to the United States.
7. **Chicago (Feb 14):** CHCGO continues to receive voicemail messages in support of protesters in Canada and critical of the PM & federal government. Out of approximately a dozen, one has been derogatory. In a House Freedom Caucus event on February 8, Representative Tom Tiffany (R-WI) suggested that "we" should be talking to protesters in Ottawa and asking them to come to the southern border of the U.S., where they might be "somewhat effective." On February 9, Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt announced that he had launched an investigation into the actions of GoFundMe "to silence the Freedom Convoy."
8. **MXICO (Feb 14):** The Mexican government's interest in the protests has been focused on the disruption at the border and potential knock-on effects to North

American supply chains (no specific disruptions linked to the protests have been identified here to date). Despite fairly significant coverage in the Mexican media, there is no indication that there will be any copycat protests or movements in Mexico. The Mexican undersecretary raised the issue of the influence in Canada and Mexico of right-wing groups in the US. Most articles were fact-focused and several include a mention of comments made by President Biden about the protests.

9. s.38



10. **Canberra (Feb. 15):** In an echo of similar protests in Canada, the Convoy to Canberra descended upon Australia's capital in late January. With numbers increasing daily over the following weeks, hundreds of cars and trucks waving Australian flags, military insignia and campaign banners for former US president Donald Trump, took to the streets and occupied various campgrounds around the city including Exhibition Park in Canberra (EPIC), just north of the Australian Parliament. Numerous demonstrations occurred throughout the city on Saturday, including upwards of 10,000 demonstrators, including many families and children, who marched along Commonwealth Avenue, past the Canadian High Commission, on their way to Australia's Parliament House. 100+ individuals who breached barricades set up in front of Parliament House. Various arrests occurred and local media reported numerous confrontations, as well as incidents of harassment. On Sunday, AFP were present in large numbers to supervise the departure of over 10,000 individuals who camped at the EPIC site. The venue had been cleared by Monday afternoon with reports of groups relocating to smaller campgrounds on the outskirts of the city. With reduced numbers, and dispersed throughout Canberra, low level demonstrations are expected to occur in the Parliamentary area over the coming weeks, resulting in traffic disruptions. Without access to campgrounds in the vicinity of the Australia Parliament such as EPIC, the likelihood of large scale gatherings, like those witnessed on Saturday, is minimized.

11. **Wellington (Feb. 15):** Feb. 15 marks the eighth day of protest at Parliament grounds. The occupation is thought to have a core of about 300 people, with numbers swelling to some 3,000 in the middle of the day. Both PM Ardern and Opposition leader Christopher Luxon continue to ignore the protesters and refuse to meet them. Police say their main goal for now is to clear the streets surrounding Parliament so people can move freely around the area. Few protesters appear to have taken up the option of free parking at the city's stadium. Police believe there is a "high probability" of protesters remaining at Parliament for days or weeks after central city streets have been unblocked. Victoria University's law school has been forced to close due to protesters

occupying the site's car park and lawns. There have also been reports of abuse and intimidation of staff and students. Several businesses located around the parliamentary precinct remain closed for similar reasons. Groups that have been identified by mainstream media outlets as taking part include those who are anti-vaccination, anti-mandate, anti the Labour government generally (and specifically anti-Ardern), Christian fundamentalist types, gang members, Trump supporters. Former Deputy PM Winston Peters has thrown his support behind some of Parliament's protesters. Peters, whose populist NZ First party was in government when NZ imposed nationwide lockdowns and health measures in 2020, said the vaccine mandates should end immediately to allow people to return to work.



12. Canada RRM (Rapid Response Mechanism) Data Analysis (Feb 14): RRM

Canada has not seen evidence of significant foreign state sponsored involvement in the online information space to date. RRM Canada notes that some foreign state media and grey media (sites with suspected links to state media) are amplifying narratives critical of the Prime Minister and the government's handling of the protest, but the majority of online content appears to derive from domestic and transnational non-state actors, including ideologically motivated (IM), conspiratorial, and COVID disinformation communities, as well as average users. Facebook has reported that some groups/pages targeting American sympathizers, including IMVE communities, were run by content mills in countries including Vietnam, Bangladesh, Romania, but there is no evidence of state affiliation and motivation could be profit.

Additional articles and coverage below.

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POLITICO PRO: Canada invokes unprecedented emergency measures — and triggers a political firestorm

BY ZI-ANN LUM | 02/14/2022 09:48 PM EST

OTTAWA — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has just taken the biggest risk of his political life. He's gone all in, [deciding to invoke the Emergencies Act](#) — the first such use in Canada's history — to put an end to the paralyzing truckers' convoy. It's a big bet for a third-term prime minister already facing criticism for politicizing the pandemic.

"We cannot and will not allow illegal and dangerous activities to continue," Trudeau said Monday afternoon in Ottawa. "These illegal blockades are hurting Canadians and they need to stop."

Invoking the Emergencies Act is a measure of last resort. It gives the federal government enormous powers to quell the disturbances, shut down crowdfunding and freeze the bank accounts of anyone assessed to be aiding the demonstrators. Trudeau sounded a measure of both willfulness and desperation in a somber late afternoon press conference with Cabinet members.

He made clear his conviction that the protests were no longer "non-violent," but also assured listeners that his government didn't intend to use military force to put an end to the "Freedom Convoy" occupation that is now entering its third week on Parliament Hill and encampments around the city.

"We're not using the Emergencies Act to call in the military," Trudeau said. He said the act doesn't mean fundamental rights are suspended nor are Charter rights overridden. "We are not limiting people's freedom of speech," he continued. "We are not limiting freedom of peaceful assembly. We are not preventing people from exercising their right to protest legally."

It was an incongruous end to a Valentine's Day, during which love songs rang out from the carillon in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill hours before Trudeau announced controversial new steps to crack down on convoy occupations. Criticism over the prime minister's historic announcement came flying from all sides and levels of government — [a rough start for Canada's inaugural kindness week](#).

New Democratic Party Leader Jagmeet Singh said Trudeau's decision to invoke the act — for the first time in Canada's history — is evidence of a failure of leadership.

"The reason why we got to this point is because the prime minister let the siege in Ottawa go on for weeks and weeks without actually doing anything about it," Singh told reporters.

That delayed response, he said, allowed protesters to shut down key trade corridors along the U.S.-Canada border, [such as at the Ambassador Bridge](#), emboldening the convoy movement.

Trudeau's bid to protect democracy in Canada was slapped down by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association as an overreach. The association said the federal government [hasn't met the necessary threshold to enact emergency legislation](#), and cautioned against its repeated use. "It threatens our democracy and our civil liberties," the CCLA tweeted.

Premiers, Canada's provincial governors, are concerned Trudeau's decision to invoke the Act could further inflame political entrenchment.

"We really need not to put oil on the fire," said Quebec Premier François Legault ahead of Trudeau's official announcement.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney said he respects citizens' rights to protest — but he believes most convoy supporters are part of the "let-'er-rip crowd." That crowd, he explained, are likely those who have denied Covid-19 as a legitimate health threat and have questioned the safety of vaccines. He pointed his finger at Ottawa, calling out Trudeau for "bad political theater" and saying that convoy supporters' "outstanding grievance" is with the federal government, not his own.

Kenney called federal mandates, particularly those just being brought in as provinces and other countries are lifting measures, irresponsible public health policy that's unsuitable "particularly at a combustible time like this."

The convoy, while loud, is representative of a minority of Canadians. But a recent [Leger poll suggests its noisy tactics are shifting public opinion](#): 32 percent of Canadians agree that it's time to lift Covid-19 mandates now. Trudeau's decision, appealing to the silent majority sick of the convoy's lawless behavior, is a risky gamble that could create more headaches for his government.

Majority of Canadians think PM "worsened" situation

An Angus Reid poll released Monday made clear that [a majority of Canadians \(72 percent\) believe the convoy protesters' message has been heard](#) and now it's time for them to go home. But the trends fall along partisan lines.

Ninety-four percent of Liberal voters wanted convoyers to pack it up, while just over half (53 percent) of Conservative voters agreed it's time for protesters to leave Ottawa.

The survey, which polled 1,622 people between Feb. 11-13, doesn't give Trudeau passing marks.

On Parliament Hill, the political lines were still neatly drawn, but there's a growing sense that Canada needs to find a way out of the pandemic. Trudeau made his historic announcement only an hour after MPs voted narrowly 185-151 against a Conservative motion proposing the government present a plan to lift federal vaccine mandates by the end of the month.

Conservatives are finding more adherents to their attack lines against Trudeau's Liberals and the federal government's handling of the pandemic.

But the protests haven't made angels of Conservatives, either.

Interim Conservative Leader Candice Bergen backed the convoy protest from the onset, using her predecessor Erin O'Toole's lukewarm support as a cudgel to topple him just days after the protesters decamped in Ottawa on Jan. 28. She remained supportive of the protest-turned-occupation, [telling protesters to keep on honking as their disruptive protest tactics](#) paralysed the capital.

Now she's turned her sights on Trudeau. "The prime minister had an opportunity to talk and to listen to people who he disagreed with, and he refused to do so," Bergen said. Invoking the Emergencies Act is a "ham-fisted approach" that will likely have the opposite effect, she said, pointing the finger at the PM

for escalating and inflaming the situation by using labels to deride people's concerns and pandemic anxieties.

Bergen somewhat softened her stance last week, calling for protesters to take down barricades after a [blockade on the Canadian side of the Ambassador Bridge snarled trade for days](#) along the key artery between the U.S. and Canada, getting the attention of U.S. lawmakers.

In downtown Ottawa, police have been unable to control disruptive behavior associated with the protest, such as all-hours honking in residential areas and the [temporary closure of businesses due to public safety concerns](#).

The interim Conservative leader suggested she has not moved into Stornoway, the official residence of the opposition leader far outside the bounds of Parliament Hill. Asked how she's able to sleep through honking and fireworks from the convoy, Bergen said she has an app for that. "I'm right downtown," she said. "I'm a white noise person, so I have my white noise app going on."

Leadership hopeful Conservative MP Pierre Poilievre is another member of Bergen's team who has been vocal with his support of the convoy. He blamed Trudeau for causing a political emergency.

"The solution is staring him in the face," Poilievre said. "All he has to do is listen to the experts, do what other countries are doing — and that is to eliminate these mandates and restrictions — to let the protesters including the truckers go back to their jobs and their lives."

His comments echo the message Conservatives have been sticking with, that the convoy protests are narrowly about a Covid-19 vaccine mandate that came into effect in mid-January in a sector where 90 percent of workers are vaccinated. The mandate is bilateral, enforced on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border.

But the movement has metastasized into a jumble of anti-government, anti-establishment anger. Poilievre, like Bergen, has been unfazed about the impact of endorsing a populist movement organized by individuals with documented far-right beliefs and attitudes.

"I'm proud of the truckers and I stand with them," Poilievre said last week. "If Canadians are being inconvenienced, or in any way suffering from these protests, it is because Justin Trudeau made these protests happen," he said [during a taping of a Postmedia podcast](#).

Convoy protests align with easing provincial restrictions

Conservatives' and protesters' demands to lift all Covid-19 mandates comes at a time where restrictions are easing across Canada, a country considered one of the most highly vaccinated in the world. The timing coalesces with dropping hospitalizations.

The Public Health Agency of Canada issued a statement Monday confirming the country is entering a "transition phase" of the pandemic, setting expectations that new Covid-19 waves and outbreaks should be anticipated, as restrictions ease.

"Future COVID-19 activity will depend on factors such as waning immunity, potential for repeated emergence of highly immune-evasive and/or more severe variants of concern, and seasonal dynamics," the statement read.

While Covid-19 restrictions remains the main focus of debate between politicians and parties on the Hill, outside, it's clear protesters are aggrieved about other issues. On the ground, the common thread is a widespread disdain for Trudeau and populist distrust of so-called elites.

"There will be time later to reflect on all the lessons that can be learned from this situation," Trudeau told reporters Monday afternoon.

The prime minister sidestepped a question when asked if the White House's interventions last week, including a phone call with President Joe Biden that touched on the Ambassador Bridge blockade, had any influence in his decision to invoke emergency measures.

Support from the U.S. president aside, Trudeau alone will have to wear his decision to invoke temporary, but extreme, emergency measures.

Under law, a public inquiry must be launched within 60 days of the expiration or revocation of the act investigating the circumstances that led up to its declaration.

The inquiry also has a reporting obligation: It must produce a report to be tabled in Parliament within 360 days after the act has expired or revoked — making the issue one the Liberal government will have to revisit next year.

POLITICO PRO: What's happening with the Canadian trucker convoy? Here's what you need to know

BY MYAH WARD | 02/14/2022 03:42 PM EST

Truckers lineup their trucks on Metcalfe Street as they honk their horns on February 5, 2022 in Ottawa, Canada. | Minas Panagiotakis/Getty Images

Since late January, truck drivers have wreaked havoc on Canadian cities, occupying parts of Ottawa and ultimately blocking the country's most vital trade route to the U.S. in protest of Covid restrictions and vaccine mandates.

The once-narrow protest, dubbed the "Freedom Convoy," has spiraled into a broader movement of the far-right as some protesters waive [Confederate](#) and [Nazi flags](#) in the streets. The demonstrations have caught the attention of conservative politicians in the U.S. who have praised the truckers as advocates of freedom.

Here's what else you need to know about the protests that are garnering international attention and their potential to further fuel the anti-government movement across the globe.

How it started — and evolved

On Jan. 28, a group of truckers traveled to Ottawa, Canada's capital, in protest of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's vaccine mandates for truckers traveling into the country from the United States.

Key organizers of the “Freedom Convoy” include Tamara Lich, who previously worked as the secretary of the Maverick party, a far-right group launched to promote the separation of the country’s three western Prairie Provinces; Maxime Bernier, who leads the far-right People’s Party of Canada; and James and Sandra Bauder, who lead a group calling itself Canada Unity. James [Bauder reportedly supports QAnon conspiracy theories](#) and has called for Trudeau to be put on trial for treason because of his pandemic policies.

The protest organizers have raised about \$10 million Canadian dollars, or \$7.8 million U.S. dollars, through GoFundMe for their “Freedom Convoy” protests. Only a small amount was actually dispersed to organizers since GoFundMe shut down the campaign after police cited “violence and unlawful activity” during the protests.

The prime minister early on dismissed the truckers as a “fringe minority” of people who don’t align with Canadian views, but the government has struggled to contain the protesters through three straight weekends of protests. First blocking traffic in Ottawa, the protests have expanded, with similar demonstrations in Toronto, Quebec City, Calgary and on the Ambassador Bridge. The protesters have said they won’t stop until the mandates are lifted. Others have said the protests won’t end until Trudeau resigns.

The protests continued to escalate over the weekend after Ontario’s premier declared a state of emergency on Friday and a judge ordered an end to the blockade on the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Michigan and Ontario. Police arrested multiple remaining protesters over the weekend, and [Canadian authorities were able to reopen the Ambassador Bridge](#) late Sunday.

Protesters are still disrupting daily life and affecting businesses throughout Ottawa this week.

What the White House is doing

The Biden administration worked with Canadian officials to reopen the key trade route over the weekend. On Sunday, White House homeland security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall announced Canadian officials would reopen the Ambassador Bridge, suggesting the most intense of the protests might be over. Other administration officials like Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas have also been in close contact with their Canadian counterparts.

[President Joe Biden and Trudeau have stayed in touch](#) to coordinate a response to the protests. The two leaders have discussed the global and American influences fueling the demonstrations, as well as Americans’ involvement in the protests — including U.S. citizens flooding 911 phone lines in Ottawa, Americans participating in the protests, and the large amounts of foreign cash funneled to protesters with 50 percent of the funds coming from U.S. donors.

U.S. conservatives weigh in

The protests have caught the attention of U.S. conservatives from members of Congress to media figures.

Sen. [Rand Paul](#) of Kentucky is one of multiple Republicans who has said he supports the protests. “Civil disobedience is a time-honored tradition in our country, from slavery to civil rights, you name it. Peaceful protest, clog things up, make people think about the mandates,” Paul said last week in an interview with The Daily Signal.

Meanwhile, Rep. [Jim Jordan](#) (R-Ohio) defended the truckers on Fox News.

“They’ve had it,” [Jordan said](#). “They are so sick of the double standard, so sick of the mandates. What they want is what God gave them. Freedom. That’s what this is all about. God bless those truckers for standing firm.”

And Fox News hosts have spent a good deal of time commenting on the “Freedom Convoy.” Sean Hannity cheered the protesters on while broadcasting live reports from the scene. “Send our solidarity, love and support to all of the brave people who are there,” Hannity said on his show last week.

[Tucker Carlson’s online store](#) is selling “I [heart] Truckers” shirts, edited from his standard “I [heart] Tucker” tee.

A larger movement

While the “Freedom Convoy” began as a group of Canadian truckers protesting cross-border vaccine mandates, it’s become a rallying cry for far-right grievances in the U.S. and around the globe.

More protests could be coming, as anti-restriction conservatives in both the U.S. and Europe cheer on the truckers. The protests have already sparked copycat “Freedom Convoy” protests in France, Australia and New Zealand. “Freedom Convoy” [protesters blocked traffic in Paris](#) this weekend, and [police in New Zealand](#) tried to disperse protesters by blasting hit songs of Barry Manilow, James Blunt and the “Macarena.”

[U.S. officials are bracing](#) for an American version of the protests.

Politico Pro: ‘Freedom convoy’ makes quiet, uncertain landing in Brussels

By Paola Tamma, Mark Scott, Camille Gijs and Hanne Cokelaere

BRUSSELS — One van arrived with “FREEDOM” written in all-caps red tape across the back.

A bus turned up with “STOP COVID PASS” emblazoned on its side, right next to the palm tree logo of BCS Tours.

A parked car with a small tarp-covered trailer hooked up behind it flew two high-visibility vests, the symbol of France’s Yellow Jacket protest movement. “*Luttez pour vos libertés*,” read a sign on the back — “Fight for your freedom.”

A few dozen vans, campers, buses and cars at a parking lot on the outskirts of Brussels marked the quiet entrance Monday morning of the so-called European freedom convoy into Brussels, the EU’s home — the latest stop of the protest movement against Covid-19 restrictions that started in Canada before going global.

As of mid-morning, Brussels police said roughly 60 vehicles had gathered in the one parking lot where they are allowing protesters to assemble — “Parking C,” next to a massive convention center barely within city limits.

[French media reports indicated](#) hundreds more trucks and mobile homes could be on the way, though, and police officers are filtering traffic on the main access routes to avoid the convoy from entering and blocking Brussels. Some factions also claimed Monday morning they were heading to Strasbourg, the joint home of the European Parliament, to meet with sympathetic lawmakers.

In the city’s EU quarter where European Commission buildings sit side by side with law firms, lobbyists and other EU-affiliated groups, there were police everywhere but only a handful of protesters. Based on the groups’ social media

channels, there were plans to gather near Parc du Cinquanteaire, which lies just east of the EU institutions. Organizers urged protesters to enter the city pretending to be tourists to avoid detection.

In other words, it was a low-key but uncertain beginning to the latest chapter in the “freedom convoy” movement. The protests have morphed from national demonstrations into a global phenomenon that has become a rallying cry for both anti-vaccination groups, as well as more extremist organizations like white supremacists and far-right political parties.

For its next move, the convoy had pledged to throttle the EU’s capital on Monday after grappling with the French police all weekend outside Paris, [a standoff that ended](#) in hundreds of fines and police deploying tear gas against several protesters. But the Strasbourg proclamations also injected a dose of perplexity into the group’s chats. In Strasbourg itself, lawmakers received a safety warning email, seen by POLITICO, that cautioned the convoy may be on its way.

Other protesters tossed around numerous directions in their chats suggesting various places to head within Brussels — Place du Luxembourg, in the heart of the EU, was one; Place Sainte-Catherine was another. At times, confusion seemed to prevail.

Over at the Parc du Cinquanteaire, the original location, fewer than 100 people had assembled by midday, chatting in small clusters. Elsewhere, including Place Sainte-Catherine, police in heavy riot gear occasionally outnumbered the protesters.

Brussels authorities last week tried to get out ahead of the protesters, preemptively [banning Monday’s demonstration](#) after seeing the activists ensnarl other cities — a key bridge connecting Canada and the U.S. was completely blocked for days and Parisian police had to mobilize about 7,500 officers to prevent traffic blockades. Law enforcement also prohibited some vehicles from entering the city until Tuesday, according to local media reports.

“We have not yet had any remarkable incidents,.” said Carla Lonneville, spokesperson for the Brussels-Capital and Ixelles police. “The police are doing filter blockages and asking people their motives and reasons to visit Brussels.” At the expansive “Parking C,” Crystal, who didn’t give her last name, said she had driven more than 1,300 kilometers from French Basque country to get to Brussels. After arriving at a parking lot in Waterloo, just outside Brussels, she said police in unmarked vehicles had intercepted her group and escorted the vehicles to the authorized location. The police, she said, took photos of the vehicles’ license plates.

“I’ve come here against the vaccine pass, against the compulsory vaccine and everything that goes along with it,” she said. “For purchasing power, too, because everything is increasing: They’ve used that to make prices soar. And for our freedom, so that we’re all equal ... and united.”

Crystal didn’t put a timetable on the demonstration.

“We’ll see,” she said. “We also have jobs. But as long as it takes for us to be heard, at least. Until now, what is shown on French and Belgian television is all doctored, it is cut, it is edited. We never hear the real voice of the people.”

The convoy is targeting Brussels because of its link to the EU. The 27-country bloc has been at the forefront of a system that is especially irksome to the convoy protesters — a continentwide digital Covid pass that displays one’s

vaccination status. The so-called Covid certificate has become necessary in many countries to fly and board trains, not to mention eat in restaurants and attend larger events.

Brussels, said Marie Line, another parking lot rally-goer, is "symbolic of Europe. Personally, I chose to follow the movement of the freedom convoy because it was the first visible movement I found against the vaccine pass itself, and I wanted to follow and it brought us to Brussels."

Indeed, the vaccine pass was the focus of a number of the scattered protests across the capital.

"*On n'en veut pas du pass sanitaire!*" people chanted in Place Sainte-Catherine — "We don't want the vaccine pass!"

On social media and encrypted messaging services — where the majority of the planning for Feb. 14's convoy has taken place — online supporters urged people to ignore the official warnings to stay away from Brussels. Instead, they called on people to take to the streets to voice their anger about alleged government overreach via coronavirus restrictions like nationwide lockdowns and vaccine mandates.

At the parking lot along the Brussels border, Line said the group may move on foot toward the city center, after the police asked them "not to demonstrate by car."

"It was not really our intention anyway because we are not allowed with the vehicles we have to enter the city," she added. "We did as in Paris, we stayed at the doors of the city in the parking lots and we are going to demonstrate on foot."

With Belgian authorities trying to quell the anti-vaccine demonstration, it's difficult to determine how many people will eventually participate in Monday's protests, even as thousands of people, via social media channels created in all 27 member countries, throw their support behind the convoy.

Still, the protests represent the latest in an increasingly sophisticated pushback against the EU's Covid-19 policies. It has galvanized a mixture of existing anti-vaccine groups, far-right politicians, more extremist movements and those who have become radicalized amid roughly two years of the ongoing pandemic.

The upcoming Brussels demonstration follows similar efforts in European national capitals, as well as across North America. Those protests were initially started by truckers protesting local vaccine mandates, but have expanded to include a similar mix of political groups angry at what they believe is the government illegally clamping down on people's freedoms in response to the Covid-19 public health crisis.

RNZ: Covid-19: Canada convoy protest reaches day 17

From [Morning Report](#), 6:48 am on 14 February 2022

Share this

In Canada, today will be day seventeen of the freedom convoy in Ottawa.

The massive protest by truckers and others against Covid-19 mandates has crippled three US border crossings - with no end in sight.

Police in the Canadian capital have stepped up their efforts to prevent protesters from obtaining fuel, food and other supplies.

Global National Ottawa correspondent Abigail Bimman spoke to Susie Ferguson.

Washington Post: Brussels braced for 'Freedom Convoy'-inspired protesters. Very few showed up. Demonstrations modeled on those in Canada were expected at the headquarters of the European Union

By [Emily Rauhala](#) and Quentin Ariès

BRUSSELS — The headquarters of the European Union braced Monday for the arrival of protests inspired by the self-styled “Freedom Convoy” in Canada — but there was no sign of large-scale blockades.

In the weeks since demonstrators blocked parts of Ottawa and disrupted traffic across the Canada-U.S. border, Europeans opposed to vaccine mandates and other public health measures have rallied online, planning convoys to national capitals and a protest in Brussels.

However, online calls for copycat convoys in European cities have for the most part fizzled — in part because of warnings from authorities and, perhaps, because some countries are already beginning to ease or lift [coronavirus](#)-related restrictions.

Sweden, Denmark and Norway have moved to end most pandemic-related curbs, and England will lift rules early. The Czech Republic announced last week that it would cancel a requirement to provide a vaccination or recovery certificate to use public services or attend events.

Europe's largest economy, Germany, will this week discuss plans to start rolling back its measures, a [three-phase process](#) that would include a return of gatherings involving more than 10 people, the reopening of nightclubs and access to restaurants for unvaccinated people with a negative test by March 20, according to Agence France-Presse.

Even with public health restrictions easing in some places, the ongoing use of vaccine passes in the E.U. remains a source of anger within many “convoy” and “anti-lockdown” groups.

The rules for accessing vaccine passes have gotten stricter in [Italy](#) and France. In France, for instance, the allowed period between an initial course of vaccination and a booster will move from seven to four months and a positive test, which counts as proof of recovery, will be valid for four months, not six.

So far, convoy protesters in France have been the most disruptive. Several groups converged on Paris over the weekend, temporarily [disrupting traffic](#) along parts of the Champs-Élysées despite the deployment of more than 7,000 police officers. Police, who had warned of fines and arrests, used tear gas to disperse crowds.

Stern warnings from national and local authorities in Belgium appear to have dissuaded convoys from entering the heart of Brussels with vehicles or large banners — at least for now.

Brussels Mayor Philippe Close told public broadcaster RTBF on Monday that protesters had not formally requested permission to demonstrate in the city. Those hoping to rally in Brussels can do so in parking lots, he said, but cannot “take the capital hostage.”

On Monday, the part of the European Quarter where groups hoped to protest showed little disruption except for additional fencing and the presence of police checking identification.

Small groups of people milled about near the European Parliament without signs or banners in an apparent attempt to protest without violating the city’s rules. Several protesters declined to speak to reporters. One man said he was there “for freedom” but declined to give his name, citing fear of arrest. A few said they were there to protest vaccine passes.

In the Telegram social media channels where members of the would-be convoys were coordinating, people shared information about vehicles getting diverted to a parking lot outside the city center and urged demonstrators to proceed to the European Quarter on foot.

The police presence in Brussels and Paris underscored nervousness in Western capitals about the ability of relatively small groups of protesters to cause major disruptions by attempting to occupy parts of cities with vehicles.

Calls for a European version of the disruptions in Canada started in late January. On Facebook, Telegram and other social media networks, those opposed to digital vaccine passes and other public health measures have urged people to block roads in protest.

The groups quickly attracted tens of thousands and split off into national-level subgroups for planning. Some are calling for the end of pandemic-related restrictions, while others demand the resignation of national governments.

This type of protest is not new. In 2018, social inequality and anger over a proposed fuel tax in France helped launch the “[yellow vest](#)” movement, an anti-establishment uprising that spawned months of demonstrations in cities and towns. The movement was also exported to places such as Canada.

In the past two years, some yellow-vest groups have joined the anti-lockdown movement, a catchall that has come to include vaccine skeptics, those who oppose pandemic health measures and, in some cases, groups on the far right.

In recent months, large protests over lockdowns have been held in European cities, with large protests in France, Germany, Austria and Italy in particular. On Jan. 23, tens of thousands gathered in Brussels.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/02/14/brussels-freedom-convoy-truckers/>

NYT (Opinion Piece): When ‘Freedom’ Means the Right to Destroy
Feb. 14, 2022

By [Paul Krugman](#)

Opinion Columnist

On Sunday the Canadian police finally cleared away anti-vaccine demonstrators who had been blocking the Ambassador Bridge between Detroit and Windsor, a key commercial route that normally carries more than \$300 million a day in international trade. Other bridges are still closed, and part of Ottawa, the Canadian capital, is still occupied.

The diffidence of Canadian authorities in the face of these disruptions has been startling to American eyes. Also startling, although not actually surprising, has been the embrace of economic vandalism and intimidation by much of the U.S. right — especially by people who ranted against demonstrations in favor of racial justice. What we’re getting here is an object lesson in what some people really mean when they talk about “law and order.”

Let’s talk about what has been happening in Canada and why I call it vandalism.

The “Freedom Convoy” has been marketed as a backlash by truckers angry about Covid-19 vaccination mandates. In reality, there don’t seem to have been many truckers among the protesters at the bridge (about [90 percent](#) of Canadian truckers are vaccinated). Last week a [Bloomberg reporter](#) saw only three semis among the vehicles blocking the Ambassador Bridge, which were mainly pickup trucks and private cars; [photos](#) taken Saturday also show very few commercial trucks.

The Teamsters union, which represents many truckers on both sides of the border, has [denounced](#) the blockade.

So this isn’t a grass-roots trucker uprising. It’s more like a slow-motion Jan. 6, a disruption caused by a relatively small number of activists, many of them [right-wing extremists](#). At their peak, the demonstrations in Ottawa reportedly involved only around [8,000 people](#), while numbers at other locations have been much smaller.

Despite their lack of numbers, however, the protesters have been inflicting a remarkable amount of economic damage. The U.S. and Canadian economies are very closely integrated. In particular, North American manufacturing, especially but not only in the auto industry, relies on a constant

flow of parts between factories on both sides of the border. As a result, the disruption of that flow has hobbled industry, forcing production cuts and even factory [shutdowns](#).

The closure of the Ambassador Bridge also imposed large indirect costs, as trucks were diverted to roundabout routes and forced to wait in long lines at alternative bridges.

Any attempt to put a number on the economic costs of the blockade is [tricky](#) and speculative. However, it's not hard to come up with numbers like \$300 million or more per day; combine that with the disruption of Ottawa, and the "trucker" protests may already have inflicted a couple of billion dollars in economic damage.

That's an interesting number, because it's roughly comparable to [insurance industry estimates](#) of total losses associated with the Black Lives Matter protests that followed the killing of George Floyd — protests that seem to have involved more than [15 million people](#).

This comparison will no doubt surprise those who get their news from right-wing media, which portrayed B.L.M. as an orgy of [arson and looting](#). I still receive mail from people who believe that much of New York City was reduced to smoking rubble. In fact, the demonstrations were [remarkably nonviolent](#); vandalism happened in a few cases, but it was relatively rare, and the damage was small considering the huge size of the protests.

By contrast, causing economic damage was and is what the Canadian protests are all about — because blocking essential flows of goods, threatening people's livelihoods, is every bit as destructive as smashing a store window. And unlike, say, a strike aimed at a particular company, this damage fell indiscriminately on anyone who had the misfortune to rely on unobstructed trade.

And to what end? The B.L.M. demonstrations were a reaction to police killings of innocent people; what's going on in Canada is, on its face, about rejecting public health measures intended to save lives. Of course, even that is mainly an excuse: What it's [really about](#) is an attempt to exploit pandemic weariness to boost the usual culture-war agenda.

As you might expect, the U.S. right is loving it. People who portrayed peaceful protests against police killings as an existential threat are delighted by the spectacle of right-wing activists breaking the law and destroying wealth. Fox News has devoted [many hours](#) to fawning coverage of the blockades and occupations. Senator Rand Paul, who called B.L.M. activists a "[crazed mob](#)," called for Canada-style protests to "[clog up cities](#)" in the United States, specifically saying that he hoped to see truckers disrupt the Super Bowl (they didn't).

I assume that the reopening of the Ambassador Bridge is the beginning of a broader crackdown on destructive protests. But I hope we won't forget this moment — and in particular that we remember it the next time a politician or media figure talks about “law and order.”

Recent events have confirmed what many suspected: The right is perfectly fine, indeed enthusiastic, about illegal actions and disorder as long as they serve right-wing ends.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/14/opinion/canada-protests-black-lives-matter.html>

NYT: Baffled by the Chaos in Canada? So Are Canadians.

The protests seem to challenge the cherished image that Canadians are moderate, rule-following and just plain nice. But was that really a myth all along?



Protesters in downtown Ottawa this past weekend. “This is a myth-busting moment,” one analyst said. Credit...Brett Gundlock for The New York Times

By Catherine Porter

Catherine Porter is a Canadian journalist who worked for 16 years at the country's largest newspaper before becoming Toronto bureau chief for The Times. She has spent a week talking to protesters, police and residents in Ottawa.

Feb. 14, 2022

OTTAWA — It seemed a classically Canadian moment in a scene otherwise torn from the book of Trump America.

Between the intersection transformed into a mosh pit and the graceful Parliament buildings cluttered with “fake news,” “the Great Resist” and “Covid red pill” signs, a middle-aged man named Johnny Rowe perched on a median last weekend with an amplifier and a simple greeting.

“Welcome to Ottawa,” he called out to the hordes streaming down the middle of the street, many hollering “freedom.” “Thank you for coming.”

If the outside world is baffled by the scenes unfolding in the streets of Canada, so are many Canadians. They are dumbfounded, perhaps none more so than the government officials who have stood by largely slack-jawed as giant trucks stake out ground in the normally placid capital, shaking and honking at night as people cheer and dance, neighbors be damned.

As demonstrations kept flaring, the government on Monday [invoked the Emergencies Act](#), which greatly increases the government’s power to crack down on protest, and in Alberta the police arrested 11 people and seized a large cache of weapons. Earlier, traffic resumed over the Ambassador Bridge, a major international route blockaded for a week, and officials announced that they were lifting some contentious vaccine pass requirements.

The chaos of recent weeks has left many wondering if Canada is witnessing the birth of a political alt-right, or if it is a pandemic-induced tantrum that, once exhausted, will curl itself asleep, leaving behind a country bewildered but essentially unchanged. It could also be, some argue, that the so-called freedom convoy is not an aberration at all but a mirror to an integral part of the country that doesn’t fit the stereotype, and so is ignored.



Counterprotesters confronting a small convoy in Ottawa on Sunday. Credit... Brett Gundlock for The New York Times

The unrest seems a rebuff to the cherished mythology imposed on Canada's citizens from abroad and held by many Canadians themselves as moderate, rule-following, levelheaded — and just plain nice.

"It feels like a national nervous breakdown," said Susan Delacourt, a veteran Canadian political columnist from Ottawa who like many of her fellow citizens is wondering what exactly is happening to her country right now.

Start with the pervasive slogan of the unrest, scrawled across trucks, hats, shirt and flags, an epithet startlingly vulgar by Canadian standards that urges Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to go away. Some say he should be not just deposed but imprisoned over the vaccine regulations governments in Canada have passed.

The anger is new. Over the past two years of public health crisis, Canadians have followed their classic playbook. Even right-leaning provincial governments dutifully took their lead, for the most part, from public health experts, passing strict pandemic rules that citizens then followed.



Protesters warming themselves Sunday in Ottawa. Credit...Brett Gundlock for The New York Times

While there have been some mask protests, more outrage was directed at local governments for not doing *more* to protect their citizens, and at [politicians who broke the rules](#). Wearing a mask, and getting the vaccine, was deemed a basic act of civic solidarity. Canada has one of the [highest rates in the world](#), with more than 83 percent of the population over the age of 5 having received at least two vaccine doses.

“Let’s take care of each other in this time of need, Canada,” Mr. Trudeau [tweeted](#) in March 2020, days after his wife showed symptoms and he became [the first G7 leader to self-isolate](#). “Because that’s really who we are.”

Maybe it is because Canada, unlike the neighbor that overshadows it, was born not from revolution but from negotiation that its approach to rebellion now seems more than a little unconventional, even quirky. But one thing is clear: The members of the so-called freedom convoy are not bellowing “compromise” or “care for one another.”

The streets of downtown Ottawa echo with chants and slogans steeped in the language of the American Revolution, right down to the Don’t Tread on Me pennants. “Freedom,” yells a man in a red mask waving a Canadian flag. “Freedom,” comes the ardent reply. Though the flag, it should be noted, was held aloft in a quintessentially Canadian fashion, attached to a hockey stick.



The streets of downtown Ottawa echo with chants and slogans steeped in the language of the American Revolution. Credit...Brett Gundlock for The New York Times

The repeated invocation of liberty is just one reason — along with the American, Confederate and Trump flags spotted in the mix — many believe the unrest is essentially a U.S. import.

For two years, Canadians have been largely stuck at home, and many have spent more time in front of the screen than ever. As they did, they absorbed the American culture war being played out from Fox News to Breitbart, and Trumpian ideas took root in Canada, said Gerald Butts, a longtime friend of Mr. Trudeau's and his [former top political aide](#).

It was not just ideas.

Right-wing activists in the United States and elsewhere have lent more than moral support to their new kindred spirits in Canada. They are opening their wallets. At least some of the money that has allowed the protesters to keep their trucks fueled and cover other expenses has flowed in from untraceable sources on crowdfunding platforms and cryptocurrencies.

Canadian political veterans have taken note.

"We ran the longest federal election campaign in history in 2015, and we spent \$42 million, right?" said Mr. Butts.

By comparison, in just a few weeks, the truckers raised about a quarter of that.

“One of the most concerning things about this movement,” Mr. Butts said, “is it’s shown how easy it is to pour millions of dollars of dark money into Canadian politics.”

The question now is how might that play out in the months and years ahead.



Traditionally, Canadian politics is a fight for the center, but populism is not totally alien to the country. Credit...Brett Gundlock for The New York Times

Traditionally, Canadian politics is a [fight for the center](#), not for the fringes of the ideological spectrum. Political analysts point out that the far-right People’s Party of Canada, whose leader, [Maxime Bernier](#), is a champion of the trucker protest, did not win a single seat in last year’s parliamentary election.

But, populism isn’t totally alien to the country, points out Janice Stein, a political science professor at the University of Toronto. A populist, the brother of the Ontario Premier Doug Ford, was once mayor of the country’s biggest city, Toronto, and for years, the Reform party rallied around a sense of Western alienation and socially conservative values.

“There’s a worrying tendency in Canada to define everything pushing against our founding myth as an import from the United States,” Ms. Stein said. “We have mythologized our niceness: ‘We are not polarized like France and Britain, and the only major democratic country in which the center has held is Canada, and that’s because we’re so nice and so caring to each other.’”

Canadian politics may in fact be more genteel than in many other places, but not because Canadians are innately kinder. That has just become a lot clearer.

“This is a myth-busting moment,” Ms. Stein said.

Sooner or later, the trucks will depart, but will the movement the prime minister dismissed as a “small fringe minority” continue to grow? Some have their doubts.

“This is a one-off political expression,” said Paul Summerville, co-author of the book [“Reclaiming Populism,”](#) which argues that Canada’s strong socialized medicine and affordable education system has given the country a sense of fairness and equal opportunity, inoculating it against populism.

“People are tired, they are angry,” said Mr. Summerville, a former investment banker in Victoria, British Columbia. “This is a very specific moment that has to do with people feeling very uncomfortable for the last two years, because of the pandemic.”

The unrest has infuriated many Ottawa residents, who have led counterprotests against what they view as an intimidating occupation of their city. But they have also drawn huge crowds of supporters, particularly on the weekends, when the downtown has been turned into what feels like a raucous tailgate party, alternative news convention and brewing witch hunt, all at the same time.



Signs stuck to a fence in downtown Ottawa.Credit...Brett Gundlock for The New York Times

Strangers stop for impromptu conversations, hug and beam at one another, smiling widely — which after two years of mask wearing offers an emotional balm. One woman paraded the streets with a sign exhorting people to show her their teeth.

It does not take long to hear stories of personal suffering, and to understand why an ordinarily rule-abiding people might decide that a little rebellion is called for.

“Every single one of these people, has been catastrophically hurt,” said Mr. Rowe, the protester, lowering his megaphone for a moment. A Bikram Yoga instructor from the city of Kingston, two hours away, Mr. Rowe listed his losses over the past two years, tears brimming in his eyes: his home, his business and half of his retirement savings. And then there was the death of his brother-in-law.

“The suffering has gotten to a level where they have nothing to lose,” he said.

Compared with many countries, Canada was let off easy by Covid, with far fewer deaths per capita than the United States. But it came at a heavy cost.

Restrictions have been heavy and long. Almost two years after the pandemic hit Canada, the country remains in various stages of lockdown, with indoor dining banned in the country’s two largest provinces, Ontario and Quebec, until only recently. Residents of old-age homes [were locked in](#) for the better part of a year across the country. Students in Ontario [missed more in-class](#) learning than anywhere in North America, local newspapers state.

Recent polls show that most Canadians disagree with the tactics of the so-called freedom convoy, and worry that the country’s democracy is being threatened. But, many feel sympathy for protesters, particularly younger Canadians.

“Imagine storm clouds on horizon,” said Darrell Bricker, chief executive of the polling company Ipsos Public Affairs. “That has to discharge somewhere. This is part of the discharge.”

Among those people watching the scenes unfold in Ottawa is one of the city’s two poet laureates, Albert Dumont. An Algonquin elder, Mr. Dumont rejects not just the protesters’ notion of freedom, given its effect on local residents, but the whole idea that Canada was ever particularly nice, or even tolerant.

“My dad didn’t get to vote until 1960 — that’s not long ago,” he said. “There was a time when Canada was ugly and very cruel to Indigenous people.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/14/world/americas/canada-trucker-protests.html>

WaPo: Opinion: Sixty years late, right-wingers join the counterculture
By [Dana Milbank](#)

The times, they are a-changin’.

Last month, when antiabortion activists and anti-vaccine protesters staged mass protests in the capital, speakers at both rallies quoted the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. “Today, we are going to reclaim Martin’s dream!” the [first speaker](#) at the anti-vaccine rally, Kevin Jenkins, declared from the Lincoln Memorial, the site of King’s immortal speech. “Are we ready to reclaim the dream?”

“Yeah!” shouted back the overwhelmingly White crowd.

“Martin is alive!” Jenkins told them. “We are here today fighting for the same thing he fought for.”

The crowd rejoiced at this discovery that King, like them, had battled for the right to take deworming medication instead of highly effective vaccines.
We shall overcome ... mask mandates?

At the same time, Fox News host Tucker Carlson has been [making a strong bid](#) to become the Hanoi Jane of the Ukraine conflict, calling for kumbaya with Russia. Night after night, he has been taking Vladimir Putin’s side and parroting Kremlin propaganda in the standoff against NATO and the United States. (Poor Putin’s just trying [“to keep his western borders secure.”](#))

Carlson’s flower-child viewers have been [calling](#) lawmakers with a message that would have enraged Republicans just a few years ago: Give appeasement a chance.

Now, truckers are staging mass civil disobedience to occupy Ottawa and shut down border crossings with the United States in protest of public health rules. And Republican officials say: Right on, man.

Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) [hailed](#) the truckers as modern-day Freedom Riders, “heroes” who are “marching for your freedom and for my freedom,” while Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) [said](#) they want only “what God gave them: freedom.”

“Civil disobedience is a time-honored tradition in our country, from slavery to civil rights,” Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) [told](#) the Heritage Foundation’s Daily Signal. “Peaceful protest, clog things up, make people think about the mandates.”

Stick it to the man — by, um, refusing to take a jab.

Just how far will this new New Right go in flattering the New Left with imitation? Well, they aren’t burning bras and draft cards — but they have been known to burn face masks. As Politico’s Jack Shafer [argued last week](#), the truckers’ takeover of Ottawa streets is an “occupation”-style protest popularized by the left with 1930s labor sit-ins, the 1968 [student occupation](#) of the Columbia University president’s office and the Occupy Wall Street movement of about a decade ago.

“The American Right Hits Its Hippie Phase” was the headline atop a [July article](#) in National Review by Kevin D. Williamson. Like the leftist radicals of the 1960s, he wrote, “the contemporary Right also hates the government, the business establishment, much of organized religion, compromise, etc., but instead of LSD and Transcendental Meditation it has hydroxychloroquine, Ivermectin, absurd mask politics, election trutherism, anti-vaccine activism, 1,001 conspiracy theories, and QAnon.”

Turn on, tune in — and drop your sense of irony.

Covering the hypocrisy of the Trump right is a full-time beat these days. “Law and order” Republicans now [embrace](#) insurrectionists. Those who decried “cancel culture” now [ban books](#) and history lessons. Conservatives who supported “tort reform” now [enshrine the rights](#) of private citizens to sue one

another. A party that welcomed libertarians now has officials incentivizing people to [report on their neighbors](#). Onetime Cold Warriors now sympathize with Putin.

The inconsistency over street protests is particularly black and white.

When a convoy of White people in trucks promotes chaos and lawlessness on the northern border, Republican officials call them heroes, and former president Donald Trump invites them to the United States. When a caravan of Brown people on foot posed a *remote chance* of chaos and lawlessness on the southern border in 2018, Trump [called in](#) the military to protect against the “MANY CRIMINALS.”

When (predominantly White) crowds protest for the right to ignore public health rules in mostly peaceful but occasionally violent and highly disruptive actions, Republican officials hail the glory of civil disobedience. When (heavily Black) crowds protested for racial justice in mostly peaceful but occasionally violent and highly disruptive actions, Trump [called them](#) “rioters, looters and anarchists” not to mention “terrorists,” “arsonists” and “violent mobs.”

“I’m old enough to remember when Black Lives Matter shut down highways and the right responded with laws making it easier to run protesters over — and get away with it!” conservative Matt Lewis [wrote](#) in the Daily Beast. It’s true: Last year, Florida’s Republican governor, Ron DeSantis, [signed a law](#) granting civil immunity to people who drive through protesters blocking a street. Texas, [Oklahoma](#) and other states enacted similar laws.

Now, Republican officials are lending rhetorical support and [financial protection](#) to the White men blocking the streets of Ottawa? This isn’t “reclaiming the dream.” It’s a bad acid trip.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/02/14/canada-trucker-protests-republicans-support/>

NYT: Canadians are responsible for roughly half of the money raised online for the trucker convoy, leaked data shows.

By Mike McIntire and Michael H. Keller

Published Feb. 14, 2022 Updated Feb. 15, 2022, 6:02 a.m. ET

New details about the source of millions of dollars supporting the Canadian trucker convoy suggest many of the larger donors are wealthy Canadians, though one of the biggest contributions was made in the name of an American tech entrepreneur.

Leaked data said to be from the GiveSendGo crowdfunding platform, posted last night to a now-defunct web page by anonymous hackers, lists records of more than 92,000 donations totaling more than \$8 million. A review of the data shows that some \$4.3 million came from Canada, while an additional \$3.6 million originated in the United States, though the United States accounted for the most individual donations. Small donations from dozens of other countries made up a fraction of the total amount raised.

One of the largest donations, for \$90,000, is attributed to Thomas M. Siebel, a billionaire Silicon Valley entrepreneur and investor. He did not respond to a request for comment sent to the email address listed in the records and to his company.

Others who made donations ranging from \$10,000 to \$75,000 appear to be mostly Canadian business owners, with a few Americans in the mix.

Brad Howland, president of a New Brunswick-based company that makes pressure washers, appears in the leaked data as having donated \$75,000, leaving the comment: “Hold the line!” In an email, Mr. Howland confirmed he was a donor, saying the protests “will go down in the history books.”

“Our company and my family are proud to stand with these men and women as they uphold the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of our great nation,” he said.

A donation for \$17,760, attributed in the data to Travis Moore of Idaho, was accompanied by the comment: “Let freedom ring, brothers of the north. Cryptocurrency is the future.” A request for comment sent to Mr. Moore, using the email address listed in donation records, was answered with a reply containing a meme objecting to Covid restrictions.

Most of the comments left by donors expressed peaceful solidarity with the cause of opposing vaccine mandates and other pandemic restrictions. Mixed in with the positive messages, however, were some with a more menacing tone, like one left by an American who donated \$50: “I’d rather pay to support this movement now than pay for bullets later.”

The presence of cryptocurrency evangelists among supporters of the convoy is apparent in a separate set of data reviewed by The New York Times. It shows donations were made in Bitcoin through a web page that went up after the initial fund-raising vehicle, GoFundMe, pulled the plug on the campaign. The new site, called “Bitcoin for Truckers,” is hosted by a cryptocurrency crowdfunding service, and had raised \$946,000 as of Monday morning.

The Bitcoin campaign, which has received more than 5,000 mostly small-dollar donations, has been supported by a handful of large infusions from cryptocurrency boosters. The two biggest, with a combined value of more than \$300,000 at the time they were made, were donated anonymously.

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A series of others valued at about \$42,000 each appear to be associated with an online challenge by a [former software engineer](#) who goes by the pseudonym LaserHodl and asked other Bitcoin fans to join him in supporting the trucker convoy. Jesse Powell, founder of the crypto exchange Kraken, [tweeted his agreement](#), and a donation attributed to him appears in the data.

Benjamin Dichter, one of the convoy organizers, said at a [news conference](#) last week that after the cryptocurrency crowdfunding campaign began, he received offers of help from “major players” in the crypto markets.

“I was shocked how quickly I started getting messages from some of the most prominent Bitcoiners in the world,” he said.

The GiveSendGo data leak was announced Sunday evening on a webpage titled “GiveSendGo IS NOW FROZEN,” with a five-minute video in which a manifesto by the anonymous hackers scrolled across the screen. In it, the hackers complained that the trucker protest had “held a city hostage” and warned it “could be cover for a type of Trojan horse attack where extremists and militia groups may arrive in large numbers with weapons.”

The data contains a record for each donation that includes the donor’s name, ZIP code and the email address they used. It is not possible to independently verify every donation, but some of them line up with donations that had publicly appeared on the GiveSendGo website before it went offline.

For example, Mr. Siebel was cited last week by a [Canadian news network](#), which noted that his name appeared with the \$90,000 donation, at the time it was made, on the web page for the convoy campaign. About half the donations were not accompanied by a person’s name when they publicly appeared on the page.

GiveSendGo, which had earlier been the target of another data hacking that revealed personal information, such as driver’s licenses and passports, for some site users, was offline Monday morning. The company did not respond to a request for comment.

Organizers started a GiveSendGo campaign earlier this month after GoFundMe shut down an online fund-raiser that had raised nearly \$7.8 million. The funds were to be used to “provide humanitarian aid and legal support for the peaceful truckers and their families,” Alex Shipley, a spokeswoman for GiveSendGo, told The Times in an email last week.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/14/world/canada/canada-trucker-protests-donations.html>